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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA: MANAGING A NATO INVITATION

REF: A. ATHENS 2029

[1B](#). USNATO 537

Classified By: Charge Tom Countryman for 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[11](#). (C) Before April, 2008, NATO will take decisions on enlargement; Macedonia's candidacy is complicated by its long-standing difference with Greece over Macedonia's name. We see no possibility of arriving at an agreed, final resolution of the name issue between the two parties prior to the April 2008 NATO Summit. As things currently stand, we assess that Greece will block a NATO invitation for Macedonia, even if it has fulfilled all MAP criteria and is ready to accept NATO membership as "FYROM."

[12](#). (C) With no prospect of Nimetz reaching any compromise on The Name before April, this cable lays out Embassy Athens thoughts on how to manage this issue in a way that facilitates Macedonia's NATO entry should it meet Alliance criteria. Key will be an outcome that allows political leaders from both Athens and Skopje to claim success. We propose development of a package of understandings between Athens and Skopje with the following elements:

-- a joint statement by Macedonia and Greece that restates key provisions of Interim Agreement -- with particular emphasis on provisions confirming the common existing frontier, renouncing any Macedonian claims to territory not within existing borders, and renouncing any Macedonian role in the internal affairs of other states intended to protect the status and rights of any persons in other states who are not Macedonian citizens.

-- A commitment by Macedonia not to seek to change its "FYROM" name in international organizations without Greek concurrence, or, alternatively, a commitment by the remaining 25 NATO states that they will not support a change in the name at NATO (or other IOs) absent a settlement on the issue; and

-- Establishment of a bilateral process of confidence building.

An additional potential element could be an explicit understanding that, after the invitation, Greece will postpone parliamentary ratification of Macedonia's full NATO membership until a bilateral solution to the name issue is reached.

[13](#). (C) Development of such a package goes beyond UN negotiator Nimetz's mandate and would likely require strong, coordinated efforts by the US and key European partners; we

suggest consideration of adding this issue to the Contact Group's admittedly full agenda. Furthermore, the United States may need to be prepared to make some bilateral assurances of its own. Absent such steps, however, we see little possibility of anything other than a train wreck over Macedonia's NATO aspirations.

14. (C) Constructing a package that brings Macedonia into NATO, but which does not cause either government to fall will be extraordinarily difficult. We must be conscious in advance that it could require not only the two parties, but the US and other NATO members as well, to accept less than ideal compromises to established principles. At a time of potential Kosovo-related instability, we believe the importance to regional stability requires us to consider such trade-offs. End Summary

Assumptions

15. (C)

-- A. There will be no Greece-Macedonia agreement on a permanent name under the process led by UN Personal Representative Nimetz prior to the NATO Summit.

Embassy Athens and Skopje consultations show no point of intersection between Greece and Macedonia's respective red-lines. As visiting EUR DAS Rosemary DiCarlo recently heard from President Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski, the Macedonians are not prepared to consider any change to the name ("The Republic of Macedonia") no matter how slight. o the M on the second elementments to arrive at a mutually-disliked-but-acceptable package.

18. (C) To reach a bilateral agreement on the two elements above, the two parties will also need to address explicitly whether it would lead only to an invitation to Bucharest, or will also include a Greek commitment to seek early parliamentary ratification of Macedonia's full membership. PM Karamanlis will NOT submit any package for ratification if it would cause the fall of his government. As we understand it, the result (of invitation without ratification) would be that Macedonia would have most of the benefits of NATO membership, but not all (it would still lack full voting rights and full Article V protection). Macedonia and current NATO members will need to face the question of whether a half-loaf strategy would serve our regional interests better than no invitation at all. We fully understand the institutional undesirability of importing this stalemated issue into NATO. But we may reach a situation in which Macedonia's nearly full membership is sufficient for the day, while preserving the future possibility that a different government in Skopje may be able to compromise on the name issue, or a stronger government in Athens would be able to force through ratification.

Process-Related Issues

19. (C) If we choose to manage this issue through construction of a package of understandings as outlined above, there are a number of process-related issues that must be thought through:

-- Who Does This: Most of what has been laid out goes beyond the scope of UN Envoy Nimetz. Although he could be a good candidate to pull such a package together, it is not inherently part of his responsibilities. We will need to grapple with the question of who would lead efforts to put such a package of understandings together and engage the parties. The manner in which such a package is presented to the parties and is subsequently negotiated will play a key, if not determining, role in the ultimate success of obtaining such a package. Both sides look to the US as the key player, and US leadership would be key in getting such a process

started. We believe it unlikely that US representatives would be successful in the absence of other NATO states, including those EU members which Greece counts upon for support of its positions. We suggest Washington consider consultations within the Contact Group (or a smaller sub-set of the Contact Group) to gauge interest in/reaction to such an approach. It is also possible that there is a role for the NATO Secretary General to play.

-- The Greek "Strategy:" The Greek "strategy" to date has been to ask the United States to "fix" the problem by putting pressure on Macedonia to accept a change in its Constitutional name. While we have pushed back, telling the Greeks that they need a strategy and not just an approach, we may need to accept the fact that the Greeks are incapable of more on this issue. The Greeks are also not limiting themselves pressing the US; they are also reaching out to

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constitutional name to differentiate it from Greek Macedonia. Those red lines will not shift between now and April.

-- B. Macedonia will be ready for NATO membership/fulfill MAP criteria.

Although the US has not made its judgment on Macedonia's readiness to join NATO, we understand that some Allies are concerned about numerous, substantial areas for further reform (ref B). However, given Macedonia's commitment to NATO to fulfill all required reforms prior to the April summit, for purposes of this message, we proceed on the assumption that Macedonia will meet the criteria, and that the only obstacle to Macedonian NATO membership is Greek opposition to its name.

-- C. Greece will not join consensus on a NATO invitation to Macedonia, even if it applies for membership as "FYROM."

Although under the terms of the 1995 Interim Agreement, Greece has an obligation to do so, it is our assessment that the Greeks are no longer ready to comply with this obligation. We have pushed back hard, arguing that a veto would be a direct violation of the IA. Our position is legally correct, but we have no expectation that this will sway Greek behavior or thinking. The Greeks continue to signal their resolve to block Macedonia's entry into NATO absent satisfaction on the name, irrespective of what the Interim Agreement says.

Package of Understandings

¶6. (C) On several occasions, we have encouraged GOG officials to utilize the procedures outlined in the Interim Agreement to begin a process of dialogue with the GOM. However, Athens has made no move to begin that dialogue, arguing that such a dialogue can only begin once Skopje has acknowledged that the purpose of such a dialogue is to arrive at a new name for itself. As a result, we believe the USG must take an initiative to work with partners to manage this issue. We (and concerned NATO partners) should seek to initiate a mediated) or guided) bilateral dialogue which would negotiate a set of understandings between Greece and Macedonia that would convince Greece to allow an invitation to join NATO to go forward. Ideally, it would also lay the basis for future resolution of the name issue. Essential elements to any such package of understandings are:

-- 1) A joint statement by Macedonia and Greece that restates key provisions of Interim Agreement. This could allow the Greeks to point domestically to significant commitments by the Macedonians, while allowing the Macedonians to note -- domestically -- that they have made no new commitments. The joint statement would have particular emphasis on provisions confirming the inviolability of the common existing frontier,

renouncing any Macedonian claims to territory not within existing borders, and renouncing any Macedonian role in the internal affairs of other states intended to protect the status and rights of any persons in other states who are not Macedonian citizens.

-- 2) A side agreement between Greece and Macedonia that any NATO invitation to Macedonia would not be followed by an attempt to change Macedonia's name in international organizations without Greek concurrence.

Among PM Karamanlis, greatest concerns is the potential for Macedonia to seek to obtain UN General Assembly recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name. He is apparently convinced that, if this were to occur after Greece failed to use effectively the leverage provided by Macedonia's NATO accession, it would be the end of his government and his political future. This is not an idle concern; seeking UNGA approval for its constitutional name seems to be part of the GOM's long-term strategy, given the fact that 117 nations have now recognized the constitutional name.

Such a side agreement could be limited to the UN General Assembly, or it could also cover other UN bodies, NATO, the OSCE, the EU, etc. The parties would also need to consider whether such an agreement would be between the two sides or whether they would seek guarantors/witnesses, to include the US and/or all NATO members.

Alternatively, the other 25 NATO states could commit themselves to a statement that they would not support any effort to change the "FYROM" name at NATO (alternatively also at other IOs, including the UN), absent a final solution on the name or Greek concurrence for the name to be changed. Obtaining such a commitment could be problematic, given

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Turkey's insistence that all NATO documents carry a footnote on Turkey's recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name. However, if such a statement were achieved, it would be seen as quite powerful in Athens and could very well obviate the need for other elements in this proposed package.

-- 3) Establishment of a bilateral process of confidence building.

There is misinformation and mistrust on both sides, and a number of the specific complaints by each side could be addressed through greater government-to-government interaction at various levels. A bilateral process of confidence building could include:

- a bilateral working group to address educational and cultural issues;
- bilateral mechanisms with third party mediators -- such as the OSCE or International Crisis Group -- to address specific complaints; and/or
- A commitment from NATO or OSCE officials to host a regular process of dialogue at the political and/or expert levels to address areas of dispute.

17. `s would be a package, all elements to arrive at a mutually-disliked-but-acceptable package.

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Paris, London, and other key capitals. Both Athens and Skopje have shown a readiness to play NATO partners off against each other. We believe this further argues for us to engage with Contact Group partners to determine whether/how we want to work together to manage Greek behavior in lead-in to NATO decisions on enlargement.

-- Any Bilateral Assurances?: The Greeks have occasionally asserted that this issue is a US and not/not a Greek problem, given that the US brokered the Interim Agreement but later emboldened Macedonia by recognizing its constitutional name. We have emphatically rejected this assertion. However, should a process begin to construct understandings between Greece and Macedonia, we could be asked by either of the parties to make additional bilateral commitments to them to strengthen any package of understandings. For example, the Greeks may want a US commitment not to support any effort to change Macedonia's name in international organizations absent Greek concurrence, even if Greece has obtained a side agreement with Macedonia on this issue. We make no recommendations on this point, but suggest that should we pursue a policy of working with partners to construct a package of understandings, we will need to be prepared to receive and respond to such requests from either side.

COUNTRYMAN